Spring Outside Plant Issue

Telephony

N INTERTEC PUBLICATION FEB. 12, 1990 INTEGRATING VOICE & DATA COMMUNICATIONS $3

DRIVING DOWN COSTS WITH FIBER OPTICS Bell

f Pennsylvania is using optically riven RSUs to serve growth areas

HACKERS ATTACK BELLSOUTH 911

Four men are indicted after year-long investigation

CN '90 HEATS UP D.C.

MCI makes international move, while Sprint keeps focus at home

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1990 Volume 218, No. 7

Telephony

INTEGRATING VOICE & DATA COMMUNICATIONS

Bell of Pennsylvania lowers its first optically driven remote switch unit into a controlled environment vault at Penn Center West office park near Pittsburgh. Cover photo by Associated Photographers Inc., courtesy of Bell of Pennsylvania

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In My Opinion

Let's do lunch

My hands are big and strong. They serve me well for using a wide variety of hand tools, pencils included. But they also are among the world's worst when it comes to functioning with the kind of coordinated dexterity needed for touch typing.

So with that kind of a handicap, how do I get by in this business? To tell the truth, I cope by using technological crutches. Tape recorders, personal computers, software programs and printers enable me to turn out good copy in the amount needed. Authors help out by sending me their manuscripts on computer diskettes so I don't have to retype them. With crutches like that, I don't have to be a top-notch typist. Twice in six years, however, I've had to upgrade my crutches.

I needed the upgrades to be compatible with new systems *Telephony* implemented, not because the old crutches wore out. What it boils down to is that, just to stay in the game, I've had to shell out money for new hardware and software before fully depreciating the old. Each upgrade involved many hours spent wading through training manuals and pecking away at the computer keyboard to master new command sets and capabilities.

Don't get me wrong. I'm explaining, not complaining. Technological upgrades and employee training extract a similar toll from telcos, but on a grander scale. During a recent conversation with a manager at a major local exchange carrier, I learned that the LEC had significantly fewer employees today than in 1980, but was delivering 50% more hours of employee training now than it did 10 years ago. While he expected the company to trim its ranks further, he said projections for the 1990s indicate that annual hours of delivered employee training would increase at the same rate.

He was able to rattle off several factors that made more training necessary, including rapid technological change, employee turnover, transfers and promotions. But it was customer expectations, competition in the marketplace and emerging technologies that were at the top of the list.

He stressed that it takes training—lots of it—to provide employees with a competitive edge. "If this company and its employees can't provide its customers with world-class telecommunications services . . . and deliver them with the degree of professionalism customers expect . . . then the competition is going to eat our lunch," he explained. "It's as simple as that!"

I think he and his company are on the right track. Competition and rapid technological change are a worldwide phenomena. In my opinion, businesses and individuals that rest on their laurels had best be wary of offers to "do lunch." It could be *their* lunch that the offering party has in mind.

A few words of warning, however, to anyone with a greedy eye on the contents of *my* lunch bucket. For one thing, I work at updating my technical knowledge. Watch me at the upcoming SUPERCOMM '90/ICC '90 show in Atlanta. I'll be squeezing as much knowledge as I can from the technical sessions, exhibits and attendees. And, as I said earlier, I have big, strong hands. Make the wrong move and they might react.

L. Frank Brisk

Telephony

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INTERTEC

LETTERS

There's a flaw

I would like to respond to the letter in the Dec. 25, 1989, issue from Rafael Fermoselle of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina (page 17).

AT&T has filed revisions to FCC Tariffs 1 and 2 (Letter of transmittal number 1881) that will allow holders of AT&T Calling Cards to place 800 calls to domestic locations using its USADirect program. The cardholder will be billed for the international segment of the call, and the 800 service subscriber will pay for the domestic portion. The proposed effective date for the service was Dec. 18, 1989.

I see three limitations in the plan:

- USADirect is generally available from only 30 countries, with limited availability from 40 more countries—including Argentina—at only specially marked phones;
- AT&T will complete calls only to AT&T 800 numbers;
- The 800 number must be subscribed to cover area code 412 because AT&T's serving operator center is in Pittsburgh.

We have discussed these limitations with our local AT&T contacts, but have not been advised of any resolution.

Charles G. Gray
Communications Systems Engineer
American Airlines Inc.
Tulsa, Okla.

800 by a different name

The letter from Rafael Fermoselle may offer misleading information.

In his letter, he complains that "Overseas potential buyers cannot dial 800 numbers from outside the U.S." and goes on to cite other examples of how overseas toll-free numbers would be of use to U.S. business.

Mr. Fermoselle is correct to the extent that U.S. 800 numbers may not be successfully dialed from outside the U.S. (and, if the customer wishes, Canada). However, equivalent service, known overseas as Freephone service, is available. MCI has been offering the service for more than a year, but the service is not yet available from Argentina. However, MCI already provides the service that Mr. Fermoselle describes, albeit usually not starting with 800, from 14 countries, and the list is growing. As of today, U.S. business can—through MCI—obtain toll-free numbers in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, France, Greece, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Alan Garatt
Manager
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Rye Brook, N.Y.

Please don't block the door

In the Jan. 15 issue, you reported the opposition of the American Association of Retired Persons and the Consumer Federation of America to changes in the Modified Final Judgment (page 3). I am not familiar with these groups or how influential they are, but it seems to me that they are doing their members a disservice by taking this position. Changes to the MFJ need to be made to open up competition and enhance services to maintain our competitive edge.

By restricting the local Bell operating companies to conduit-providing status only—as these groups suggest—competition is stymied. In the areas being served by local cable companies, has service, quality, variety of programming or price levels improved? As the amount of customer complaints received by the government show, they have not improved; they have no competition so there is no incentive to improve performance. Why would these two groups back a policy that limits their members' ability to choose? How can the BOCs, the main components of the network, be excluded?

AARP and CFA complain about the implementation cost of the new technology. If not now, when? Are we going to leave it to the next generation to bear the cost? Without implementation, the cost will not come down and development of new technology will be curtailed. The two groups endorsed the idea of having the customers use their home computers to access the services; this sounds elitist. Many network users do not have home computers, and why should they? The network should be accessible to anyone. There are terminals on hand and on the drawing boards that will make access to the network universal. The only problem is cost; without competition and deployment, the cost will not come down.

The only way to improve our network is by encouraging competition, and by establishing a coherent and sensible national policy. For this to be achieved, the MFJ must be amended to allow the BOCs into the arena, and let the marketplace decide who survives. The consumer should not subsidize an enterprise in the name of competition. Let the BOCs in.

Delio Vento
Associate Manager
Southern Bell
Miami

Correction

The article, "Finding a key to the market," in the Jan. 29 issue (page 23) contained an error in the second paragraph. The sentence should have said, "In 1989, it [the key system market] boasted 4.3 million in shipped stations and was valued at $990 million, according to the North American Telecommunications Association's 1990 *Telecommunications Market Review and Forecast.*" It incorrectly said, "... $4.3 million in shipped stations...."

Tell us what you think!
Letters to the editor should be addressed to *Telephony* Letters, Telephony Division, Intertec Corp., 55 E. Jackson Blvd., Suite 1100W, Chicago, IL 60604; Fax: 312/922-1408. Letters should include the writer's full name, title, company name, address and phone number. Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity or space.